



## **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**The Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee convened in a regular meeting on Monday, May 5, 2014 at 301 W. Second Street, Room #1101, Austin, Texas.**

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Mayor Pro Tem Cole (Chair)  
Council Member Morrison  
Council Member Riley

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pro Tem Cole called the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

#### **1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

Mr. David King, spoke on the Zilker Park Bridge and that this bridge is intimate to him. He has walked over and under this bridge many times of the 20 plus years he has lived near this location and when he first moved to Austin over 35 years ago. The bridge is very special to him, the structure of the bridge; it takes you back to those early days. It is more than just a bridge. Mr. King is very hopeful that the City of Austin can preserve the beauty and the character of this bridge and that it will still fit into the Zilker Park character.

Mr. David King, spoke on the Code Diagnosis being a very important part of the project and it is very important that the stakeholders to review it. Mr. King is hopeful that the stakeholders can review it and provide comments and then it is refined and another draft presented. Also, when we look at the complexes of the Code of things that have been added over the years, were added because those things are of community values. These community values are being perceived as part of the problem and not the value. The City Council has passed many of the ordinances that are in the Code today. It is a good thing for the community to be heard and not a bad thing. I'm hopeful that as we go through the diagnosis those changes that Council have made because the stakeholders has asked them to, that the changes themselves are not perceived as bad wrong things. Those are good things and hope they are in the new code and not casted aside.

Ms. Mary Ingle, had comments regarding the Auto-Centric Code and the parking. This is one of the problems with single family zoning that sometime parking requirements are served as site area requirements. Whereas multi-family projects have site area projects built into them already. Ms. Ingle feels Council should look that portion a little more carefully because people who live in multi-family buildings have parking requirements and they also have cars. How will the neighborhood plans be respected and reflected in the new LDC? Within the presentation staff is doing key word searches and within my mind that is not the most in depth way of going about it. You have to do more than count words or do key searches. Does the consultant's know how the neighborhood plans will play a role in defining our neighborhood growth? Also, would like assurances that these plans will be respected. As David King stated will the public have an opportunity to review the comments that have been submitted so we will know how it will be used and if it is interpreted correctly. That is paramount for a good quality product and a good quality process.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked Ms. Ingle about her statement of single-family homes of the auto centric?

Ms. Ingle, stated it was related to the presentation number 5 Auto-Centric Code the comment was made related to a duplex of parking requirements related to single families might be excessive when really there are only 3 parking places and if there are six people in a duplex means there might be more like six cars. Multi-family properties have site are requirements which actually help and determine the massing and scale of that property which single family zoning does not.

Council Member Riley, asked Ms. Ingle if parking requirements for single-family areas are affected as they served as minimum site area requirements. Why you wouldn't just do a minimum site area requirement?

Ms. Ingle, stated there are no site area requirements for single family now. The multi-family has those built into it.

## **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

June 2, 2014 – Approved the May 5, 2014, minutes on a 3-0 vote.

## **3. OVERVIEW OF THE BARTON CREEK BRIDGE PROJECT ON BARTON SPRINGS ROAD**

Mr. Howard Lazarus, Director, Public Works, spoke up on the upcoming designs of the Redbud Trail Bridge and Barton Springs Road Bridge. The bridge on Redbud Trail crosses Ladybird Lake near Tom Miller Dam and was built in 1948. The interim strengthening completed in 1998. The 2012

inspection resulted in “fair” rating, traffic volume/weight of vehicles exceeds initial design intent and the bridge are near end of its useful life. On the West side it has steep slope and curves. The 2012 bond identify \$3M in design funds.

The Barton Springs Road Bridge crosses Barton Creek at Zilker Park and was built in 1925, and widened in 1945. The current condition assessment is “fair”, but will require substantial rehabilitation in the near future. The bridge is functionally obsolete and is a traffic bottleneck. The sidewalks have non-compliant elements and the intersection with Robert E. Lee Drive and retaining wall on PARD Umlauf property needs to be addressed.

Both of these bridges were on a list of priorities provided to BEATF, but neither bridge is funded for construction. The work approach is use a qualifications-based selection process (RFQ) to hire a highly skilled engineering team, engage a second firm to provide “peer” review, combine design efforts for both bridges to gain efficiencies, rework RFQ to ensure rehabilitation options are also considered and clearly call out cultural aspects and report back as desired upon completion of the Preliminary Engineering Reports.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about the work approach of not going on the rotation list because you were going to try and get someone with expertise?

Mr. Lazarus, stated that we made that decision because when we review the qualifications for special projects that when architect come to us that they have all of the necessary teams with the expertise that we are looking for and meet the special requirements that will include addressing any Historic preservation requirements.

Ms. Linda Anderson, Texas Historical Commission, stated she or someone on her staff will be reviewing part of this project under the Federal Section 106 law plus the Texas State Antiquities Code. Ms. Anderson and Mr. Lazarus have discussed this and he is committed to following the process. Before the RFQ goes out she will review it to ensure it states not just design work, but doing the cultural coordination under those two laws because it is a National Registered listed bridge.

Council Member Morrison, asked Mr. Lazarus if the RFQ will have that information Ms. Anderson just stated?

Mr. Lazarus, stated yes.

Council Member Morrison, stated she continues to hear comments that the bridge is functionally obsolete and is a traffic bottleneck. Maybe we should with a study of the intersection and get options of what to do?

Mr. Lazarus, stated that the intersection of the bridge is a single system and we would look at both of those, as well as the future traffic projections. Currently, there is an alignment issue of how the lanes are currently structured from the bridge and there may be some needs of additional turning lanes.

Council Member Morrison, stated she doesn't believe we have set as community our goals for that intersection yet and how does someone know how to set a design if there are no goals of the intersection?

Mr. Lazarus, stated they have addressed some of the challenges during events from Zilker Park of the safety of people. As part of the engineering preliminary we should consider all of those and can write those into the scope.

Council Member Morrison, asked Mr. Lazarus if he would write in the RFQ that there will be an upfront discussion about what should be our goals for the intersection?

Mr. Lazarus, stated yes and we can write that in and will have to come back to Council to get that contract approved.

Council Member Riley, asked about the work approach of the two bridges being treated independently so there will be separate process for each?

Mr. Lazarus, stated he would potentially like to work them together or separately. It would be the effective use of staff to do it that way.

Council Member Riley, asked if he would solicit a single award for each bridge or multiple awards?

Mr. Lazarus, stated it depends on the review team's recommendation of the award.

Council Member Riley, asked how would you combine that all in one award, wouldn't you treat the engineering part separately from the actual construction?

Mr. Lazarus, stated the overall process will be a Design Bid Build approach. Most likely we will go through the assessment, come up with a preliminary engineering report, come back to Council to see what option to pursue, and then seek the okay to go through a detail design approach and have that ready to go when we have another bond funding opportunity or other sources of funds.

Council Member Riley, asked how will the design process take?

Mr. Lazarus, stated about 12 months.

Council Member Riley, asked about the Historic concepts of the Barton Creek Project?

Mr. Lazarus, stated the bridge is over 50 years old and we will require some type of historic review and will be part of the process.

Council Member Riley, asked about the parking for Redbud Bridge?

Mr. Lazarus, stated the goal was to keep the 100ft long spin and go across the bridge and come back down, being there is not through traffic there anymore you could add some more parking.

**4. BRIEFING ON CODENEXT, DIAGNOSIS DRAFT REPORT, WHICH FOCUSES ON SUMMARIZING MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE PUBLIC, CITY STAFF AND THE SONCULTANT TEAM WITH THE EXISTING LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE**

Mr. George Zapalac, Program Manager, CODENEXT Project and Mr. Daniel Parolek, Principal Opticos Design Inc., stated the intent of this presentation is to give an introduction of the Code Diagnosis.

This Code Diagnosis will help in the dialogue with neighborhoods and other members, but also help us toward the next steps to alternative approaches. The Land Development Code (LDC) is 30 years old and is in need of some major Code rewrite. In review of the timeline we are currently at the second release of the Code Diagnosis and we have long way to go. In early 2015 we will begin the rewrite of the LDC.

In putting the Listening to the Community Report Summary, we feel was very successful. We compiled thousands of comments from nearly 800 Austin participants, identified patterns to identify the main issues, or themes. Most importantly, we feel this method helped to give up guidance as we move forward. The six key theme categories are: 1). Affordability; 2). Environment/open space; 3). Neighborhood characteristics; 4). Design of development; 5). Transportation and 6). Code issues.

The top 10 issues within the LDC based on the Code Diagnosis are: 1). Ineffective base zoning districts; 2). Competing layers of regulations; 3). Complicated “opt-in, opt-out” system; 4). Lack of household affordability and housing choice; 5). Auto-centric code; 6). LDC not always in line with Imagine Austin; 7). Lack of clarity and usability; 8). Ineffective digital code; 9). Code changes adversely affect department organization; 10). Incomplete and complicated administration and procedures. The Base Zone Districts do

not recognize appropriate form or different types of places. Less than 50% of the City is regulated without overlays.

The intent for the “Opt-in, Opt-out system was good, but the follow through on the application was not very effective. The lack of household affordability is a big issue. We do understand the LDC will not solve Austin’s affordable household issues, but is an important tool that the City needs to have in its toolbox. What parts of the Code impacts construction and development cost? Inefficient approval and permitting process; restrictive limits on density in some areas. Few policy levers in place to preserve or enhance existing affordable house and currently density bonus programs are not yielding needed results. The Auto Centric Code, parking regulations are prohibiting small scale compatible infill such as parking areas in a small neighborhood. The current LDC does not proactively implement Imagine Austin. The priority program one is to invest in a compact and connected Austin, with City and partners have invested in transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, but transportation infrastructure has not kept pace. The priority program two sustainably manage water resources, what is more manageable? The priority program four, integrate nature into the City. During several conversations tree preservation came up this is very important for character of place or the character of Austin. Projects are finding creative ways of preserving existing trees.

The lack of clarity and usability adversely affect LDCs effectiveness. Inconsistent structure and location of content, basic graphic design and usability in new code, such as strong headers and footers, table of contents, clear indenting, section breaks, and labeling, and clear graphics and illustrations visually explain regulations. The Code changes adversely affect department organization. LDC complexity impacts the organizational structure; the multi layered system lacks a by-right discipline, difficulty of maintaining a common interdepartmental mission and continuous amendments complicate administration and staff training. This effort is the opportunity to break down silos between departments and to improve integration. The side effects of LDC complexity are the strains of the Development Assistance Center (DAC) workspace; increases potential for conflicting department requirements. The incomplete and complicate administration and procedures creates inconsistent and/or lengthy reviews. The process not will defined, administration information spread throughout document, missing or incomplete code administration information, inconsistent interpretations, overlapping layers of boards and commissions and convoluted variance and appeal process. Also, the lack of flexibility to add staff during upswings and the inability to respond during those upswing processes.

To conclude in regards to what’s next, this Code Diagnosis process, being released today for public review and comment and will be integrating those

comments, but it's the foundation for us to make the plan and untangle the mess of the current LDC and put those options on the table.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked Mr. Parolek for the well put together presentation and especially the top 10 issues analysis.

Council Member Riley, thanked everyone for a great job and asked what sort of solution would allow us to have corner stores, but relieve the uncertainty of having them some place we may not want them?

Mr. Parolek, stated he felt that some of the corner store tools could be sharpen a bit more to make the intended built resort in terms of form very clear as well as maybe differentiate it based on types of application context.

Council Member Riley, asked about household affordability inefficient approval and permitting process. Is this something that we could address now or do we need to wait until after the Code is complete? We have had complaints about our permitting process for some time and a lot of people would like to make progress on that immediately.

Mr. Parolek, stated that ties back to the length of time because time is money when the clock is ticking for a developer. It's worth exploring opportunities to reduce the length of time on projects that meet affordability goals.

Council Member Riley, asked that Mr. Parolek also stated that current Density Bonus Programs are not yielding needed results. By Density Bonus Programs are you referring to mixed use as one tool that offers a way of addressing affordability?

Mr. Parolek, stated yes that affordability is an example of one of the bigger ones that didn't achieve the numbers that we thought it might.

Council Member Riley, stated we are seeing a lot of development along our corridor where we have VMU in place, for instance South Lamar. Are these really VMU projects or listed under base zoning projects?

Mr. George Adams, stated some of those along South Lamar are VMU, meaning so of them are providing affordable units.

Council Member Riley, stated on slide #30 it states regulations are creating Auto-Dependent Density. Does the scope of your work entails actually looking at subdivision rules how we initially divide up subdivisions?

Mr. Parolek, stated that a subdivision is being led as a separate effort, but we are intended to collaborate with subdivisions.

Council Member Riley, asked about slide #31 the parking regulations and what Mr. Parolek is seeing within other cities of addressing that basic problem? Particularly in older neighborhoods that did not development a lot of parking?

Mr. Parolek, stated that the first step of that foundation process is careful consideration for what that context is, having access to transit options or walkable urban context. Various cities have done different things. One example will be not requiring off-street parking for units of a certain size under 500 or 600 square feet.

Council Member Morrison, asked about the traceability effort to old and new code? Where would that show up on the timeline chart if we are doing that?

Mr. Adams, stated that is important to the Council and the community to be able to trace that and it is our intention. It will show up once we start to draft the code.

Mr. Parolek, stated that when we draft the approach options we will have a general sense where the bigger sections will be shifting to.

Council Member Morrison, stated she has a lot of concerns about slide #28 and place on the hot button list where are the places that we are contemplating putting these? Are there other places between the corridors and the single families' neighborhoods that the consultants are thinking of?

Mr. Parolek, stated the diagram is not intended to illustrate a transition, it's simply to illustrate that on the far left hand side you have the single family home and the far right hand side you have the mid-rise. This is just a general scale of development. Just saying there is a broad range of development types that fit into that small footprint that is pretty capable with single family homes.

Council Member Tovo, asked about the mapping which would show areas of neighborhoods where it wouldn't be appropriate? Please clarify your statement from earlier.

Mr. Parolek, stated that it is very helpful to just create a map that just shows areas within the city that are primarily single families' and where there won't be any intent to make major changes to those areas.

Council Member Tovo, stated she looks forward to seeing those maps because they would be very helpful.



**5. BRIEFING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF IMAGINE AUSTIN  
RELATED TO “PRIORITY PROGRAM #1: INVEST IN A COMPACT  
AND CONNECTED AUSTIN**

Postponed to June 2, 2014

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Cole adjourned the meeting with no objection at 4:05 p.m.